

What's The Issue?

Our kids are used to having all types of creative work available at their fingertips. People's writing, artwork, videos, and images can be inspiring. But we often forget about copyright law, which protects people's creative work. Even though kids may feel they have the right to use anything they find online, the Internet is not a free-for-all.

Why It Matters

Kids are responsible for following copyright law and respecting creative work online. There are exceptions, such as fair use, which allows kids to use a small amount of copyrighted material without permission in certain situations, such as for schoolwork. Younger children may not realize that copying and pasting material they find online is plagiarism. Older children may not realize that illegally downloading and sharing music and movies is piracy, which is like stealing. Parents can help kids recognize the hard work that goes into creating something like a book, movie, song, video game, or website, and explain why giving – and receiving – credit is important.

Common Sense Says

Help your kid make a habit of using the following process to be a responsible and respectful user and creator.

1) ASK

Who is the author? How does the author say I can use the work? Do I have to get the creator's permission first?

Identifying the author or artist of a work will help kids remember that behind every work is a person who made it.

Help your child look more closely to see how the author says their work can be shared.

2) ACKNOWLEDGE

Did I give credit to the work I used?

Teach kids early that they can show respect by giving credit. Just as they would want to receive credit for things they make – like artwork, pieces of writing, or photographs – they should give credit to people's work they draw from. See if your child's teacher has a policy about giving credit or citations, and encourage your child to use it.

3) ADD VALUE

Did I rework the material to make new meaning and add something original?

Help kids share their independent voice by encouraging them not to just copy and paste information from others, but to use it in a way that helps them say what they want to say – in their own words.